

March 7, 1984

LB 886

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Wesely. Senator Fenger, did you wish to speak to the...Senator Wesely is back.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature, I would oppose the Kahle amendment. Senator Johnson has reiterated for you the history of this issue, and for those of us that were around when it began, we do remember the long struggle that we went through to effectuate this takeover by the state of the Medicaid program. It was in the best interests of all of Nebraskans to do this but it was a very difficult thing to do. It was very costly. We are now in the process of going through that takeover, and at the time we finally reached an agreement between all parties, I think it was clear in all our minds anyway that the element we are talking about today that the state would set those standards was fairly clear and to now after we have gone through the first stages of the takeover that we have agreed to, to now change the agreement I think is a mistake. That is why the committee in the committee amendments took out this element of the bill. We felt that a bargain had been struck and that this legislation ought not to change that bargain in midstream and so the committee did take that action, we did reflect on the history of this issue and clearly I think Senator Kahle does have some concerns. The counties have legitimate concerns. I understand what they are saying but it is wrong at this time to make that change. I think those standards ought to be statewide. I think when you are talking about this care and the levels of care we are going to provide, I think you have to recognize that somebody is in need in Lancaster or Douglas or Custer or Scottsbluff, any different county that you are talking about is going to have a level of need that is not much different from the other counties and thus there really isn't the need for each county to set their own level. What it really allows is for those counties to not provide for those needs that are out there and to provide that health care that I think is needed. And I think the counties are recognizing the fiscal impact. We have all got to be concerned about that. But truly we have struck a bargain and we ought to keep that bargain and maintain our present legislation in this respect and reject